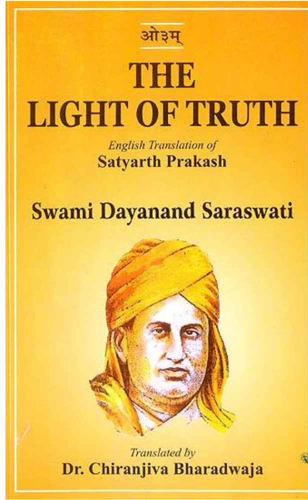
Friday June 12: Satyārtha Prakāsh Jayanti



The Satyārtha Prakāsh - a "masterpiece" among the scholarly writings of Maharshi Swami Dayanand Saraswati.

Swamiji was the influential social, religious reformer and the founder of Arya Samaj. Originally written in 1875, Swami ji revised it in 1882 to purge the fallacies added by the script writer and/or printer. It is now available in more than 20 languages including Sanskrit, English, French, German, Swahili, Arabic and Chinese.

Satya (truth) + Artha (meaning) + Prakash (light). The Satyārtha Prakāsh is commonly known as 'The Light of Truth'. The *poorvāda*, first part (chapters 1 to 10) is an advocacy of Vedic ideals and the *uttarārdha*, second part (11 to 14) is a comparative study of different religions/sects/faiths. Swami Dayanand concludes with a statement of beliefs and disbeliefs, a logical brief of Vedic principles.

Why the Satyārtha Prakāsh? The post-Mahabharata era was marked by a decline of Dharma, the universal living values. Rampant ignorance, superstitions, injustice, discrimination widened the divide in society. With the advent of polytheism, even God was divided. Several faiths and sects sprouted in the Indian society. Focus changed from Eeshvar (God) to the founders of the faiths, and the founders of the faiths and sects became the preferred deities during rituals, ejecting the one-and-only Omnipresent, Omniscient, Formless, All-Just, All-Merciful God. Spirituality went down the drains. The rigid birth-based caste system replaced the merits-based *Varna vyavasthā* and further fragmented society.

Swami Dayanand - the first Vedic scholar of the modern times to educate people on the Sat Sanatan Vedic Dharma. He unfolded the real concept of God, devotion, and worship, the correlation between science and Vedic philosophy, and disseminate the authentic knowledge of the Veda and allied Vedic texts. He left no stone unturned to denounce the divisive caste system, blind faith, superstitions, false and meaningless customs and promote universal brotherhood among mankind. At the request of Raja Jayakrishna Das, Swami Ji agreed to compile his ideas in book form to benefit those who had no privilege of listening to Dayanand and future generations.

The work started on June 12, 1874. Dictations by Swami ji were penned down by a writer and was concluded in September 1874. The first edition was published in 1874 in Varanasi. Swami Dayanand was on tour and did not even see the proof. The writer and printer took advantage of his absence and inserted passages contrary to the Vedic philosophy and Dayanand's teachings, like the taking of bath to wash away sins, meat eating, offering of food to departed souls, etc. The last two chapters, critical of Christianity and Islam were simply omitted not to frustrate the British rulers. When the conflicting passages were brought to notice of Swami Dayanand he promptly reviewed the issue; hence, the 2nd publication which is considered as the authentic Satyārtha Prakāsh. The following is an overview:

- **The first part (*poorvāda*) - a synthesized compendium on Vedic philosophy**: (1) An exposition of "Om" and other names of God; (2) The upbringing of children; (3) Student life and celibacy, the

duties of scholars and teachers; (4) Marriage and married life; (5) Renunciation & Ascetism; (6) The Science of Government; (7) Veda and God; (8) Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution of the Universe; (9) Knowledge and ignorance, and emancipation and bondage; (10) Desirable and undesirable conduct and permissible and forbidden diet.

- **The second part (*uttarāda*) - a comparative study of major religions**: (11) Critical study of the various religions and sects prevailing in India; (12) Chārvaka, Buddhism and Jainism; (13) Christianity (the Bible); (14) Islam (Quran).
- **The *Svamatantvya-Amantavya Prakash* - shakes off the absurd to reveal the brilliance and logic of the Vedic principles**.

To the beginner, in quest of the universal living values of mankind and to be truly human in thoughts, words and deeds, I would suggest to start like the novice who starts learning swimming, that is - take time to read and understand the Satyārtha Prakāsh, be patient and delve gradually into this masterpiece on the guidelines given by Maharshi Dayanand himself therein – the four fold process to effectively and efficiently engage in any study: (1) *Shravana* - read attentively as spirituality is the most profound of all sciences; (2) *Manana* – think over the subject matter read, till one gets a general understanding of the part read; (3) *Nidhidhyāsana* – put questions on the pros and cons to clear own doubts, reason out the logic; and (4) *Sakshātkāra* – realization that one has acquired correct knowledge of the characteristics, properties and nature of the object under study.

Why read/study the Satyārtha Prakāsh?

- It is a guide to seekers on the spiritual path and live spirituality as spiritual reality in daily life.
- It induces readers to regularly engage self-introspection (*ātmanirikshan*), and activates our critical thinking faculty (observing, analyzing, wisely interpreting data and information, and engaging in constructive reflection, evaluation, inference, explanation, problem solving, and decision making).
- It a booster to achieve enlightened intellect (*medhā buddhi*), the software enabling us to differentiate between truth (*satya*) and untruth (*asatya*), virtue (*dharma*) and vice (*adharma*) and be unshakably assertive in our duties and responsibilities as well as shun laziness (*ālasya*) and negligence (*pramāda*);
- Exposing the con and tricks of blind faith and superstitions, it unfolds a holistic approach to good governance, starting from the microlevel (self) and onwards the macrolevel (family, society, nation, world) on the motto *of Krinvanto Vishvamāryam* and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.
- Paving the way to grasp the real meanings of the Veda mantras (Vedic hymns), it is a roadmap leading to the correct path (*shreya mārga*); from humans as a specie, we shall become truly sensible, rational and coherent humans (*manurbhava*).

Acharya Bramdeo Mokoonlall